

Testimony of

Katie Bloom

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Before the

Education Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

I am writing in support HB 6884, an Act Concerning the Recruitment, Retention and Enhancement of the Teaching Profession, which in my opening is one of the most important bills for educators in Nearly four decades. The bill addresses: Minimum Teacher Salary is essential. I am a teacher married to a teacher and we share 3 children. We work tirelessly for our students but deserve a minimum wage for our families. Finances for us have always been hard trying to keep up with our children's needs. COVID Benefit Enhancement are well deserved for those of us who taught through the pandemic. We're building the plane while we we're flying it. We worked tirelessly to support our students and families and put our health at risk with no additional pay or incentives. Teacher Tax Credit is essential given the money we pour into our classrooms and education with low pay in return. I am still paying off debts from my masters degree. And every year I put hundreds into class supplies. Raising the Kindergarten Start age is important. I teach second grade and my students are anywhere from 6 to 8 based on our flexible start times. Four year-old does not belong in kindergarten. And children starting that early continue to struggle in a variety of ways as they move up through elementary school teachers work hard to support the students, but that doesn't mean they belong in school at four years old. Similarly, all three of my kids have late birthdays. We waited and started all of them after they were five. But I had to fight hard to get my boys who are in special education an additional year in public preschool before sending them to kindergarten. To add to that, support of Play-Based Learning is also essential as it supports learning and development of social skills. With all that is expected of teachers and a high degree with which teachers have

to be turned on during the day we are absolutely entitled to appropriate protections and break times. Several days a week I teach for 4 1/2 hours straight without any sort of a break or relief. This is excessive given the fact that I'm with students nonstop for this time and cannot even go to the bathroom. Teachers schedules are very difficult. I often reflect on time I spent working in retail in high school and college and think that the break practices I'm giving now would be illegal in those businesses. Not only do teachers need brakes, but they need time to prep and prepare so they can be high quality teachers. Duty-Free Prep Time and Educator Bill of Rights are essential! Please support teachers. We have supported you and your students and children. We deserve protections under this bill.

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CT teacher since 2004

